Swinging on a Double Action Heinous Hinge With Donald Trump

By Edward Curtin

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"The Spectacle is not a society of images, but social relations among people mediated by images."
– Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*

It is well known that people argue vociferously over U.S. politics. They have always argued, but we are now so deep into maniacal disagreements that something significant has changed. People scream at each other or refuse to speak. Curse each other out.

Today, "reality and illusion" exchange places every nanosecond. It is life the horror movie and we are swinging on the stars without a reasonable leg to stand on. A knowledge of history and its context, once learned by reading books and rational discourse, is a thing of the past. This is not nostalgia speaking, just a statement of fact. It is common knowledge. The internet and digital technology have us lost in the clouds where we save data that won't save us.

Anything anyone can say about the demagogic Donald Trump is true, whether it comes from his critics, his supporters, or those who look on in amazed horror and fascination that such a gross, vituperative, and openly violent creature is the president of the United States of America. He has made crystal clear the nature of a rogue state.

He is the face of explicit imperialism and dictatorial domestic rule, a brutish thug whose core maxim is might makes right and fuck you if you don't like it. Crude barbarism from a country that so often has preferred to operate "nicely and tacitly" under the hood of the rules-based order.

Because he seems fictional, his serves his factual function. Because the medium is the message and he is the medium, his policy messages distract from the function he serves as the surrealistic open face of U.S. imperialism. He is the double-action hinge that swings the two-faced political system open and closed.

As a super-rich comical Reality-TV showman, he never could have twice been elected to the presidency unless digital screen media and the internet had not replaced paper culture. He is screen culture personified. And the digital internet media – it must be emphasized – are controlled by the telecommunications corporations working with the government to control the people's minds and quash dissent. They are the future created to eliminate any semblance of "democracy" by digitalizing everything. They are the government spies and totalitarian partners in the dystopian future that is closing around us unless popular organized rebellions miraculously arise to challenge them.

The small number of independent voices that exist on the internet are operating under the constant threat of censorship and shutdown. Such could happen in a flash. Artificial intelligence (AI), just like Shakespeare-for-Dummies or Smart Phones, is a misnomer so extreme its propaganda function is Trumpist in its effectiveness. We are living under the CIA's internet MKUltra mind control for everyone.

Who can deny Trump's uniqueness?

Who can deny the shock he sent through the political establishment when a decade ago he, with his comical orange-mopped visage and punk-boy demeanor, popped grinning out of his jack-in-the box, only to have the entrenched politicians and corporate media aghast. They tried to push him down and lock the lid with their patently false Russiagate lies (no evidence for which was admitted under oath by prominent Democrats in 2017 and documented in detail by Jeff Gerth in 2024 in the *Columbia Journalism Review*) aimed at getting Hillary Clinton elected, but many desperate voters, sick of the Democrats' deceptions and desperate for a savior, cranked the handle and he popped back up again, and

then again eight years later. It's impossible to keep an evil American politician down.

Whether those voters have grasped the magicians' trick and how they have been conned by the ruling class, time alone might tell. I doubt it.

But who can deny that Trump is a phenomenon? Those who voted for him might have been echoing Virgil's words: "*Aurum in stercore quaero*" – "I am looking for gold in the dung," only to find shit in the gold. Power and politics have since ancient times been about the sacred. The Gold King Trump is no exception. Because the sacred and the secular cannot be distinguished in the myths that fuel our politics, we are caught in a religious war between the ruling factions. It is why there is today a strong whiff of the demonic in people's inability to talk calmly about any of this.

When God is dead for so many, the sacred nature of politics becomes apparent as people argue over whose god should rule, even as the real battle is between the have and the have nots. That the U.S. has been waging endless wars under Republican and Democratic Presidents for so many decades should be, but isn't, proof of that.

It is equally true that Trump is an extremely dangerous authoritarian whose hold on reality is more tenuous by the day; it shouts from his mouth with every utterance. Only a burlesque like the 1896 French play *Ubu Roi* (sometimes translated as *King Turd*) by Alfred Jarry might begin to grasp the full extent of the danger and grandiosity of his infantile, grotesque, and criminal behavior.

The key question to be addressed is how and why he has emerged from the idiocy of Reality-TV to be twice elected to the presidency in a reversal of the more traditional candidates. It is clearly not an accident.

"In Freud's succinct formula," writes Norman O. Brown in *Life Against Death*, "excrement becomes ailment; but it remains excrement, as Midas, with his *auri sacra fames* (accursed hunger for gold), discovered when he became hungry." Trump is the first digital Internet party animal to serve as head of state and

scramble all expectations. His overt excremental vision with its filthy lucre atop his golden head is akin to the billion dollar lotteries that call to the worst in everyone. Get rich or eat shit. Obey or die. Make Steroidal America Healthy Again. The American Dream as a nightmare.

This is because Trump is a spectacle, an image, a hologram conjured out of the dark underside of the swamp of the Unites States' brutal, ruthless, and violent history. That is why he serves as the double action hinge that swings the self-contradictory idiocy of the revolving door of what passes for political debate and democracy in the U.S.

Although he seems to be a real person, it is apparent when looking at him that he is a flatulent, orange tie-dyed AI image that can sort of talk English like AI Siri and issue threats to Iran, Russia, Cuba, Mexico, Venezuela, Palestine, Columbia, Greenland, and any other damn country, university, corporation, or person he wishes, and all sorts of people will fall on their knees in deference to this Reality-TV hologram. Although he walks and talks and gives orders to kill, his image swallows all reality, as it is meant to do, even as he wages wars, invades countries, bombs, kills at will, cracks down on dissent, and openly assumes the role of dictator.

If his spectacular image didn't exist to serve to mediate the contronymal debate and relations between people and parties of all political persuasions, he would not be president. His image is father to the man. It fascinates (bewitches) because it is so obviously ridiculous, but its fascinating effects strengthen its powerful hold on the control of the political system.

He is the overt manifestation of the covert killer instinct – "hard, isolate, stoic, and a killer" in the words of the English writer D. H. Lawrence, describing the American character.

Because Trump says and does openly what has often been done insidiously by American presidents, going back to the founding of the nation, he shocks by his audacity. He commits crimes as if he were smirkingly firing some contestant on his former Reality-TV show. While Ronald Reagan could routinely call Nicaragua

a “totalitarian dungeon,” and use the Contras to try to overthrow its legitimate government, Trump, while using similar language about Venezuela, simply bombed the country and kidnapped its President Nicolás Maduro and his wife.

In a recent interview with *The New York Times*, when asked if he felt there were any limits on his global power, he said, “Yeah, there is one thing. My own morality. My own mind. It’s the only thing that can stop me.”

These are, of course, the words of a madman posing as a head of state. It is Reality-TV bleeding into reality.

Less than a year ago before he began his second term, he was praised by many on the so-called “right” and “left” as a man of peace, one who would bring all our troops home and stop wars. “Those who are praising him now say he is a changed man after ‘time in the wilderness’ these last four years (one is reminded of Nixon’s wandering wilderness days from 1960-1968),” I wrote at the time; adding that they should hold their applause. For only one consumed by pipe dreams would buy such bullshit. Would a changed man have Elon Musk as his right-hand man or have as Vice President JD Vance whose career has been backed by Palantir Technology’s Peter Thiel? Trump has made it very clear that digital technology is the key to his rule, and these men are at the heart of it. They are not men of peace.

As I write, the U.S. is bombing Syria and Somalia and Trump has threatened to hit Iran “very hard,” which could happen very soon. He has no intention of ending the proxy war with Russia via Ukraine. He has no intention of ending any war. He is an open-faced imperial narcissistic thug threatening everyone at home and abroad.

His renaming of The Kennedy Center to glorify himself, while having led to no deaths, is symbolic of his narcissistic mania. No matter what he says or does – bomb countries, kidnap leaders, lead the world to nuclear war, persecute innocent immigrants, assume domestic powers unheard of heretofore, etc. – not one high official in his administration publicly objects or resigns, as they prefer

to kill their consciences for power and gold. For all the macho talk emanating from the administration, it seems clear that it is staffed with moral cowards.

For Trump is a Double Action Rogue's Hinge and Head Gangster of a Gangster State. The words of the English playwright Harold Pinter in his 2005 Nobel Award speech about America's violent imperialism still ring true, but with a twist:

It never happened. Nothing ever happened. Even while it was happening it wasn't happening. It didn't matter. It was of no interest. The crimes of the United States have been systematic, constant, vicious, remorseless, but very few people have actually talked about them. You have to hand it to America. It has exercised a quite clinical manipulation of power worldwide while masquerading as a force for universal good. It's a brilliant, even witty, highly successful act of hypnosis.

The somewhat secret sinister U.S. actions of the past are now under the demagogue Trump carried out so unambiguously and so in-your-face that the imperialist nature of the floundering U.S. empire is obvious. As a result, it gives legitimacy to the Democrats' more cultured and refined approach that has been the dominant method previously. Trump attacks, kills, mocks, insults, ridicules, anyone and any country he wishes. He speaks in the overworld just like a Mafia boss in the underworld. His language, assertions, and actions are so shocking, surreal, and constant that they have become normalized and expected. Everyone is flabbergasted by his actions, even as he crushes dissent in so many ways.

If we are lucky enough to survive this psychopath now that the masks have come off, he will paradoxically have served his temporary function of swinging the gate open for our traditional rulers to return again. They will crack down on our freedoms as they have done since 2001 and do their killing more mannerly.

Nicely, the way most people prefer it.

According to the rules based order. As in Vietnam, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Palestine, Yemen, Afghanistan, Serbia, etc.

You know: Traditionally.

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